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Background on Surprise Attack Talks

(Prepared by
for [redacted])

1. Soviet proposal of 10 May 1955 (DC/SC.1/26 Rev 2) London meeting of UN Disarmament Subcommittee. USSR proposed "in order to prevent a surprise attack" that an international control organ establish "control posts at large ports, at railway junctions, and in aerodromes . . . to ensure that no dangerous concentration of military forces take place." US position was that USSR did not make adequate provision for effective inspection.

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2. Eisenhower "open skies" proposal, 21 July 1955 (DC/SC.1/28-29 Aug 55) Geneva Heads of Government Meeting. Eisenhower proposed all of US and USSR be open to aerial inspection and that both countries exchange military blueprints.

a. US Outline Plan to Implement 21 July 55 proposal (DC/SC.1/31-30 Aug 55)

b. Supplement of 7 October 55 (DC/SC.1/36)

3. Eisenhower letter to Bulganin, 1 March 1956 (DC/SC.1/37 - 19 March 1956) "Great surprise attack would be guarded against if the USSR accepted the 'open skies' proposal."

4. US proposal at UN Disarmament Subcommittee, London, 21 March 1956 (DC/SC.1/39 and DC/SC.1/40, 21 March 1956) US proposals for inspection and control system which would include ground control posts, aerial survey, mobile units, and an effective world-wide communications system.

5. USSR proposal at UN Disarmament Subcommittee, London 27 1956 (DC/SC.1/41 - 27 March 1956) Renewed Bulganin proposal for ground inspection posts . . . "inspectors would have unimpeded access at all times to all objects of control."

6. Bulganin letter to Eisenhower, 17 November 1956. "USSR is prepared to consider the question of using aerial photography in the area in Europe where basic military forces of the North Atlantic Pact are located and in countries participating in the Warsaw Pact to a depth of 800 kilometers to the East and West of the line of demarcations of these forces."

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7. Eisenhower to Bulganin, 31 December 1956, noted that Soviet's apparent refusal to accept his Geneva proposal which called for aerial inspection of the US and USSR to avert surprise attack.

8. Lodge Proposals to the 11th General Assembly, 14 January 1957. Proposed, among other things, that progressive installation of inspection systems take place as safeguards against "great surprise attack". Soviet representative denounced the Western view that political settlements were inseparable from comprehensive disarmament.

9. Soviet proposal, UN Disarmament Subcommittee, London, 18 March 1957 (DC/SC.1/49) repeated 17 Nov 56 proposal for aerial inspection in 1600 kilometer European zone.

10. Lodge proposals, UN Disarmament Subcommittee, London, 19 March 1957. US is ready and willing for either small or extensive steps toward disarmament . . . insists on adequate inspection. "Our insistence on adequate inspection is not a whim."

11. Soviet proposals, UN Disarmament Subcommittee, London, 30 April 1957. Agreed to aerial inspection within a sector in Europe as proposed by the US with modifications. US had suggested a wedge-shaped area from the north pole to Marseilles in one corner and Odessa in the other. The Soviets now proposed an area bounded roughly by London, Riga, Athens and Madrid. No Soviet territory except a small part of the Baltic states would be included. The USSR also proposed an extension of the area to include a small part of Soviet far eastern territory and most of the US west of the Mississippi.

12. UN Disarmament Commission, Subcommittee of US, UK, France, Canada, 29 August 1957 (DC/SC.1/56, Annex D.) The four allies agreed on inspection of US, USSR and Canada or lesser areas if the USSR will not agree on the more extensive area.

13. Second Interim report of the Working Group on Disarmament Policy, State Dept. Disarmament Document Series (DDS), #16, 28 April 1958. "The US will reaffirm its willingness to agree to aerial or ground inspection of all the US, USSR and Canada or lesser satisfactory areas."

14. Soviet Complaint in Security Council against US bomber flights, New York Times, 22 April 1958.

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15. Eisenhower letter to Khrushchev, 26 April 1958. Suggests talks on surprise attack after Soviet charges of US bomber flights toward Soviet territory.

16. US proposal on Arctic Zone, 28 April 1958. Introduced in UN Security Council, amended by Sweden, vetoed by the Soviet Union. (Disarmament Document Series, State Dept. #17, 19 May 1958). Proposed aerial inspection of the area north of the arctic circle with certain exceptions and additions. (Also in New York Times, 30 April 1958.) A 29 April 1958 resolution called for a summit conference at the earliest possible date and expressed hope that the problem of surprise attack would be discussed.

17. Soviet proposals for a summit agenda, 5 May 1958. Called for control posts at railway junctions, large ports and major highways, as well as for aerial photography in a strip 800 kilometers on each side of the dividing line in Europe. Said the US proposal for aerial inspection of all US and USSR cannot be considered in isolation from a lessening of international tension and the disarmament problem.

18. Khrushchev letter to Eisenhower, 9 May 1958 (FBIS 12 May 58, p. BB1.) Says US proposal for arctic aerial inspection unsatisfactory since surprise attack can come from other areas. Suggests talks.

19. Khrushchev letter to Eisenhower, 2 July 1958 (Disarmament Document Series (DDS) #28, 24 July 1958. Let's get together and talk about surprise attack. (Also in FBIS, 7 July 1958, p. BB1)

20. US note to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, 31 July 1958 (Disarmament Document Series, Dept. State, #30, 31 July 1958; also in New York Times, 1 August 1958) US doesn't agree to inspection areas indicated by Khrushchev in 2 July 1958 letter. Russian territory is scarcely touched. Soviet proposal seems motivated by the desire to crystalize the present dividing line in Europe. US proposes talks on surprise attack begin in Geneva on 1 October 1958.

21. French statement to US, Disarmament Document Series, State Dept #20 and 21, 3 September 1958. French want each delegation at proposed surprise attack talks to retain national character. (Apprehensive over possibility of US domination.)

22. Discussion of composition of Western representation at surprise attack talks, Disarmament Document Series, State Dept., #22 and 23, 3 September 1958. UK opposes Soviet proposal for "bloc for bloc" representation.

23. US note to USSR, 8 September 1958. Prods USSR to answer US proposal for Geneva talks on surprise attack originally proposed for the first week in October. Now the US believes they should begin two months after receipt of the Soviet reply.

24. USSR note to US, 15 September 1958. Disarmament Document Series, State Dept., Ref. #42, 17 September 1958 (Also in FBIS, 16 Sept 58, p. BB 1.) Soviets note the favorable position of the US toward talks on surprise attacks. "The assertion of the US that the Soviets agree the discussions should not predetermine the corresponding positions of both governments in connection with the time and interdependence of the different aspects of disarmament has no foundation." Soviets suggest Geneva talks on 10 November for about 4-5 weeks. Suggest representation by US, UK, France and Belgium/USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Rumania.

25. US agrees to 10 November date, Outgoing State Telegram, 1153 to Paris, 2 October 1958. Confidential S/S. Italy will be represented instead of Belgium. Canada "and others" may be called for technical opinions.

Additional documents of interest

a. Draft, US objectives and terms of reference for surprise attack talks. (appended.) (A revised copy will be available later.)

b. UK draft terms of reference, Disarmament Document Series, State Dept., #28, 26 September 1958. Talks should determine: (1) Means (weapons) by which a country might be attacked, (2) What inspection methods and means of control are necessary, (3) The degree of security which such inspection methods might attain, and (4) What manpower and other resources will be required under the various hypotheses.

c. Probable Soviet positions at the surprise attack talks, ONE memo to the DCI, 9 September 58. Secret. Sent to [redacted] from ONE on 20 October 1958. The Soviets are likely to take the zonal approach and may present again Khrushchev's 2 July 58 proposal (800 kilometer aerial

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inspection zone on each side of the NATO-Warsaw Pact line in Europe) at the opening of the conference. They may agree to add zones and features to the original "1600 kilometer" area. If the US presses for the extensive, all US-USSR aerial inspection zone, the Russians are likely to say we are impractical and by stressing such a broad scope we really indicate that we want no progress at all. They will repeat that "assurance against surprise attack is inseparable from reduction of forces and elimination of certain weapons."

The Soviets possibly will enter the talks with the intention of giving them a political turn from the outset, or at some stage they may provoke a breakdown in a propaganda context favorable to themselves."